

27. Health and Safety in the Workplace

1 INTRODUCTION

As an employer, you will need a policy in place which outlines responsibilities in relation to Health and Safety in the workplace. This factsheet provides some of the key elements that considerations that should be included in a Health and Safety policy, in relation to responsibilities for health and safety, risk assessments, manual handling, stress management, display screen equipment, eye health and lone working.

The elements of health and safety referred to in this factsheet are not exhaustive and it is advisable to obtain further information from the Health and Safety Executive (www.hse.gov.uk).

2 RESPONSIBILITIES

Your policy should clearly state who has overall responsibility for complying with health and safety legislation and outline the responsibilities of the employer and the employees.

Responsibilities of the employer

The employer is responsible for ensuring that the employee’s health and safety is protected in all activities at work. This includes:

- **Ensuring that there is safe and adequate equipment** - The employer will ensure that all equipment is regularly inspected and maintained, in accordance with a maintenance schedule.
- **Safe premises and place of work** - The employer will ensure that the premises are safe, and that all hazards are removed where possible.
- **Competent and safe fellow employees** - The employer will ensure that all employees receive the appropriate training so that they are competent in all their work duties.
- **A safe system of work** - The employer will ensure that all processes of work are safe.

Responsibilities of the employee

The employee is responsible for ensuring that his/her actions do not cause danger to themselves or to anyone else. This includes:

- **Not to tamper with any equipment** - Employees should not carry out any alterations to equipment which might compromise health and safety.
- **Not to use any equipment without receiving appropriate training** - No employee should use any equipment without having the appropriate training.

The responsibilities listed above are not exhaustive and you should gain a full understanding of the responsibilities of the employee and employer in relation to health and safety.

Chemicals and other substances - All chemicals and other substances that are hazardous to health must be stored and used in accordance with the manufacturers’ instructions.

First aid personnel

First aid personnel have the responsibility to:

- administer First Aid in accordance with the current legislation and approved code of practice
- record all accidents that are reported to them in the Accident Book
- re-stock first aid boxes at regular intervals and when necessary.

Fire Marshals

Fire Marshals have the responsibility to carry out the duties for which they are trained when emergency evacuation of the workplace is required.

3 RISK ASSESSMENTS

You are required to carry out regular risk assessments of the area and activities under your management. The risk assessments should be recorded in writing, with an agreed target date for any actions that have been identified.

4 MANUAL HANDLING

All employees who are involved in any lifting or carrying must attend training in relation to manual handling. This training must be renewed every two years. You are responsible for ensuring that all employees requiring this training attend the training course at the appropriate time.

5 ACCIDENTS

Although every effort will be made to ensure a safe environment it is accepted that accidents can occur. If an accident does occur this must be reported immediately and recorded in the accident book. If any of the following occur they must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive under the RIDDOR procedures (see www.riddor.gov.uk):

- Fatal accidents
- Major injuries
- Accidents resulting in a period of absence of more than seven days
- Injuries to the public where they have to be taken to hospital.

6 STRESS MANAGEMENT

Workplace stress is an important health and safety issue and you should commit to identifying and reducing the causes of workplace stress. Stress can be seen as detrimental to an individual's well-being.

The effects of long-term stress can be seen in physical, intellectual, emotional and behavioural signs. Stress can be caused by a significant range of factors, both work-related and as a result of situations in an employee's personal life.

Common signs that suggest an employee is suffering from stress include:

- the individual becoming withdrawn or isolated
- standard of the work decreasing suddenly
- frequent sickness absence, whether or not stress is provided as the reason for the absence
- increasing lateness and poor timekeeping
- the individual becomes short-tempered, irritable or cynical

Monitor whether employees are achieving a satisfactory balance between their working time and personal time. As a minimum, you have to provide staff with the legally required rest breaks and rest periods, as set out within the Working Time Regulations 1998.

There are steps that employers can take to promote a positive work/life balance for employees:

- considering flexible working patterns and home-working benefits, where appropriate
- monitoring whether staff are taking work home with them and addressing this with those that do
- ensuring managers are not placing pressures on staff to carry out work outside of working hours.

Stress and disability discrimination - Health conditions can be legally protected under the Equality Act 2010 where they meet the definition of a disability. It is highly important that employers take steps to ensure a person suffering from mental illness is not discriminated against within the workplace.

Supporting an employee's return to work - When an employee who has had a stress-related absence is ready to resume their daily role, it is important they feel supported and understand what will be expected of them.

7 DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT

The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 apply to work with display screen equipment (DSE). Display screen operators may suffer from postural difficulties and visual fatigue. You should aim to provide a working environment that is both comfortable and maximises the effectiveness of employees.

Monitoring and review - In order to achieve our goals, we will assess risks from the use of DSE. The assessment will be followed by the provision, maintenance and monitoring of appropriate control measures to minimise any risks identified.

Policy on eye health - This Company recognises its responsibility for compliance with the Display Screen Equipment Regulations 1992 and our duty to protect our employees from the risk of eye-strain. Display screen users are entitled to request an eye test specific to the use of a display screen. The Company will meet the cost of these eyesight tests.

If prescription glasses are required for display screen work the Company will also pay the cost of basic lenses and frame.

8 LONE WORKING

Solitary working exposes employees to certain hazards. As far as is reasonably practicable, you should ensure that employees and self-employed contractors who are required to work alone are protected from risks to their health and safety.

You should assess the risks of working alone and whether the work can actually be done safely by one unaccompanied person.

This will include the identification of hazards, including:

- the remoteness or isolation of workplaces
- any problems of communication
- the possibility of interference, such as violence or criminal activity from other persons
- the nature of injury or damage to health and anticipated "worst case" scenario.

Lone workers should receive all necessary information, instruction and training to enable them to recognise the hazards and appreciate the risks involved with working alone. Employees are required to cooperate with these efforts to ensure safe working and to report any concerns.

9 NEXT STEPS

- Understand what requirements and responsibilities you will need to put in place and what responsibilities your employees have in terms of health and safety.
- Develop policies in line with the health and safety executive (www.hse.gov.uk) and/or a health and safety advisor.
- Communicate your health and safety related policies and procedures to employees and ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to health and safety. Ask employees to read your health and safety policies and sign a form to say they have read and understood them.

10 FACTSHEETS & TEMPLATES

- Promoting an Equal Opportunities Workplace and Avoiding Discrimination
- How to Guide and Checklist to Manage Homeworking

11 FOR MORE ADVICE AND INFORMATION

ACAS - (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) free and impartial information and advice to employers and employees on all aspects of workplace relations and employment law. www.acas.org.uk

Achieve in Bath & North East Somerset - free recruitment support, advice and help. Matching job seekers, employers and course providers to help employers recruit, train and retain employees. www.achieveinbathnes.co.uk

Future Bright - free help & support for businesses and employees to realise their full potential. Provide access to training and development, workshops and networking. HR support to promote career progression and best practice to attract and retain staff. www.futurebright.org.uk

***Bibliography** - this fact sheet was produced by Rathbone HR Solutions in association with Cool Ventures Ltd in December 2018 with content sourced from; HR Inform (www.hr-inform.co.uk), ACAS (www.acas.org.uk), CIPD (www.cipd.co.uk), the pensions regulator (www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/en/employers), HMRC (www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs), the Information Commissioner's Officer website (www.ico.org.uk)*



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